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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
9 June 1954

State Dept. review completed

TO: Deputy Director (Intelligence)
SUBJECT: Australian Election Results

On 30 May, initial returns from the previous day's elections for the Australian House of Representatives established the fact that the Menzies coalition government had been returned to office by a reduced but workable majority.

According to the most recent information from the American embassy in Canberra, the final count on the election of 29 May will probably give the government between 64 and 66 seats in the new House with Labor holding the remaining 55 to 57. In the outgoing House, out of a total of 121 full voting seats, Menzies' Liberal-Country Party coalition had held 68, the Labor Party 53.

Party discipline in Australia has not broken down since the 1930's, thus the government's tenure may be regarded as reasonably secure for the statutory three years.

The Australian voting system is such that in a close election the final count is necessarily long delayed. Voters indicate first and second preferences on their ballots. There are often three or four candidates (Liberal, Country, Labor, Communist or independent) for one seat. If first preference votes do not give a clear majority to one candidate, the low man is eliminated and second preferences on ballots cast for him are distributed among the remaining contestants. If there are four candidates a third count may be necessary to give one of them a clear majority.

In the recent election there were 294 candidates contesting the 121 full voting seats. They were distributed as follows: Labor - 113, Liberal - 95, Communist - 43, Country - 25, independent - 18. According to the returns thus far reported, Labor received slightly over 50% of the popular vote; the Communists received just over 1%. No Communists were elected.

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